

Newborn Screening For Congenital Heart Defects



Information for Parents

A Lifesaving Law

NJ was one of the first states in the country to pass a law that all newborns need to have a screening test for Congenital Heart Defects (CHDs). Your baby will be tested for certain types of heart defects before leaving the hospital.

What are Congenital Heart Defects?

Congenital Heart Defects (CHDs) are problems with the way the heart formed or the way blood flows through the heart. Some CHDs can make a baby sick soon after birth. It is important that babies are tested for these heart defects before going home from the hospital.

How is the CHD screening test done?

The CHD screening test uses pulse oximetry or pulse ox for short. Pulse ox is a way to check the amount of oxygen in the baby's blood. This quick and simple test is done with a machine called a pulse oximeter. A sensor with a small light is placed on the baby's hand and foot and is attached to the pulse oximeter to check the baby's oxygen level. Low oxygen in the blood can be a sign of a CHD.

Test results

Sometimes a healthy newborn may have a low pulse ox reading. A low pulse ox reading could also mean there is a heart or breathing problem. If your baby's CHD screening test shows low oxygen levels in the blood, more tests may be needed to find out the cause.

Importance of Regular Check-ups

It is important to bring your baby to all regular check-up visits. The pulse ox test picks up many, but not all types of heart problems at birth. There is a chance that a baby may have a normal pulse ox test and still have a heart defect. Babies who have heart problems may seem very sleepy, have a hard time eating, breathe fast, or look pale or bluish in color. Call your baby's health care provider if you notice anything unusual about the way your baby looks or acts.

If you have any questions about CHD or pulse oximetry, talk to your baby's health care provider.

For more information about CHD screening contact:

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www.newbornscreening.nj.gov

More information on [Congenital Heart Defects](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/heartdefects/) is available at
www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/heartdefects/

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